PHOTO EXPECTATIONS

Please read all this for the first time, and use as a reference for the future. If you are focused on tv/film work, please discuss headshot expectations with your primary theatrical agent.

1. Get a variety of looks: smiling, not smiling, at the camera, away from the camera, semi-profile, and full body, preferably in action, not posed. Don't always shoot from the same side, and although fun, severely angled photos do not work well for our purposes. Most people should be photographed at eye level, though some variety can be interesting. Generally, avoid smiles that show that bottom teeth and open mouth shots unless part of a joyous action shot.
2. For print photos, research your child's age range in marketing and emulate that. How many kids' stores sell suits? (Only an occasional trendy look.) Holiday shots in dress-up clothes, or the standard family pics in white shirts on the beach are not used (except for a family photo). For wardrobe guidelines, please select the appropriate age pdf here: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/p7np4cz7c1yyfrj/AACqLMYSMELfo6EbIrnVns6ra?dl=0 for ages 13 and under.
3. PREPARE for your photoshoot. See Photo Information for reiteration and specific instructions – we have a procedure! Don't just pull things out of your closet an hour before and show up with wrinkled wardrobe; it wastes your time and money. Clothing size does matter when it comes to photos; clothes should not be too baggy and distracting. When we say we want variety, that doesn't mean we want photos of your child in 4 different color polo shirts. For older print kids, that variety may mean a happy kid shot, an athletic shot, a rebellious shot, a trendy shot, an upscale shot, etc. Ask your agent! It's also is fine to try a unique outfit as one of your photo options, but make sure you ask your agent along with the other looks.
4. Change hairstyles to go with the wardrobe. For example, please don't shoot that rebellious look with perfectly curled gorgeous hair. Avoid big flowers, bows or any other large hair accessories; you want them to see your child and not be distracted by the clothes or accessories. For girls with complicated hair, you may want to do two separate sessions if your child's hair can vary drastically. (*also see third page!)
5. Pose/express according to wardrobe look… We don't want big smiles when talent is wearing that moody/skater/rebel look. Also consider the backgrounds. If your happy kid was just photographed in front of that awesome blue wall, we aren't going to buy the conversion of that child into that sad little girl in front of that same wall.
6. If you use extreme accessories like funky cowboy boots, fake glasses or cutesy bowtie, always shoot some pictures without that attention-stealing element. Sometimes, they work, and other times we cringe because we might have loved the outfit, but just without that… Keep shoes simple. Plain black/grey/navy/white clean sneakers are handy. A neutral pair of Converse may be a good investment for your shoot, auditions and for shoots.
7. If your child excels in a sport or dance, photos of this are totally desirable as long as we can tell it is your child and it meets our overall quality standards. For dance shots, we still prefer a natural look, not competition makeup and costumes… and no crotch shots!
8. Do not use make-up on children under age 13, except for the slightest cover-up, powder, and clear lip-gloss if desired for kids 10+. Skin should be well moisturized. Make sure nail polish and temporary tattoos are gone!

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

9. Do not use any shoes on babies under 12 months (not walking). Bare feet are best!
10. Take a look at your child close-up before starting to take photos. Remove crumbs, dirt, food in the teeth, drool, etc. With babies especially, get up close frequently during the shoot to see if you need he/she has gotten dirty during the shoot. Remove earrings.
11. Do not shoot at playgrounds, on play equipment, or with toys in general. Consider what you see in ads for the types of things for which your child will be auditioning. The client needs to see that your child will perform without the playground or toys. Absolutely no shots in high chairs, car seats, bathtubs, or diapers/naked.
12. Have fun! Take photos of your young child often (even if it's just a few snapshots a day without worrying about clothes and backgrounds) so they get used to getting their photos taken, and enjoy yourself! If your child doesn't feel like smiling, don't force it; maybe today is the day to get those serious shots. As they get older, it's a fine line between keeping them practiced and annoying them with so many photo sessions they don't want to do it anymore! Listen to your child and keep their interests in mind; it's not worth your time to take a child to auditions that really doesn't want to do it.
13. A photo session may allow for several wardrobe changes, but some kids can only get through 2-3 outfits before melting down. A happy kid is better than more outfits. Time your professional session at the best time for your child. Don't take that session that isn't ideal and hope it will all work out. Pick clothes that are quick to change.
14. Get other people to take photos of your child so they don't associate getting their photo taken with just you. This helps prep them for when they go to auditions, have to leave your side, stand on the X or the line, and smile for their photo for a total stranger.

IF YOU ARE SHOOTING YOUR OWN PICS (OR KEEPING AN EYE ON YOUR PHOTOG)

15. The newest cellphones are amazing and you can really get some fantastic photos on your own. Generally, keep the background in mind and avoid busy, distracting backgrounds, especially people. If your phone or camera has a portrait setting, use it.   If your camera has more advanced settings, choose "A" and set it on the lowest possible number as this will help to blur out the background. If you use this setting, you must focus on your child's face and then recompose. Do not select a background that matches or blends with your child's hair. We need to be able to see that outline of their hair.
16. Avoid direct sunlight, especially midday. Best is to try and get reflected light, off a white wall, for example, but with your child in the solid shadows. Also avoid tree shadows; sunlight is better than speckles on them! You may want to try to photograph them in the edge of a solid shady spot, but use a reflector to focus light back on their face. You can buy a small reflector for under $10, but keep in mind you may need someone to hold the reflector in the right spot and if you try to use it on a bright, sunny day, most kids will be sensitive to the reflected light. You can also buy a big white board and use it as a reflector, or for the photographer and/or assistant/parent to wear white. That white reflects in the child's eyes.
17. If you have chosen a location near a wall or building that doesn't have character (like stucco), have them stand a few feet away, use the settings in tip #13 and that will help blur the background.
18. It is always better to physically get closer than to be far away and use your zoom.

GENERAL DIGITAL PHOTO INFORMATION

Digital cameras take photos typically in "jpg" file format. This is a widely accepted format that compresses information to make file sizes manageable. Some cameras take photos in RAW format, which leaves the digital information untouched but creates a much bigger file. For our purposes, jpg files suffice, but you may receive RAW files if you use some professional photographers. RAW format is not to be confused with "raw" unretouched photos. Newer iPhones take HEIC files which are not recognized by many websites and programs. You may need to convert HEIC files to jpgs.

A digital picture is comprised of little blocks of color called pixels. Every camera creates photos that have different number of pixels across and high, and that determines your photo resolution. To print well, photos, once cropped, have to have at least 200 pixels per inch, preferably 300.

Any recent camera can produce this size image; just make sure your camera or cellphone is set to the highest resolution of which it is capable (except the latest iPhone 14 Pro - those can take super big images you likely don't need!) You can usually find your photo pixel dimensions and files sizes in your Windows START menu or Mac FINDER when you click on the file name for the particular photo. You can also get this information when you open up the photos in whatever photo program you use.

Of course, taking pictures at higher resolution means bigger file sizes.   This is great for quality, but bad for electronic transmission. (FYI - In addition to being bigger from using a higher camera setting, messages increase in size while in transit through the Internet beyond the actual sum of the size of text, graphics, pictures, and attachments. Encoding of a message for transmission through the Internet leads to a size increase of approximately one-third.) Email programs and websites can "downsize" files so they come through more quickly online. This means two things for you:

1) When you are sending photos to your retoucher and want the files to maintain their large size, check your email program to make sure that the option to downsize photos is turned off. If you are sending a handful to your agent for quick viewing to select an additional shot or something, choose a setting that makes the file sizes smaller; that makes it quicker for us to view them.
    a. On Windows computers once you attach a photo, on the Insert tab, click the Include Dialog Box Launcher. In the Attachment Options pane, under Picture options, click on the appropriate option.
    b. On Macintosh computers, this option comes up as a selection box in the upper right corner of your email when you attach a photo. It will maintain the last used setting, so make sure the appropriate option is selected.
2) When you need to send many photos to us for our review, use an online album per our Photo Information document. Most online gallery providers automatically take your original, large files and make copies of them in much smaller files that upload quickly on the internet. That way we can view many photos almost instantaneously. While you need 200-300 pixels per inch to print, you only need 72 pixels per inch to view them on a computer monitor. These little files created by these services, however, are not

printable; converting a photo to a smaller file size removes information that is needed to print a decent photograph. Therefore, you often cannot send a link to an album to anyone if they need to print or retouch unless that service retains the original file size for download. To get the original-sized files to them, you can also email or use an online file delivery service like hightail.com, Google Photos, or Dropbox.com.

Speaking of converting files, let's discuss photo alteration. Unless experienced, your own retouching, color conversion, or "auto-fixes" can do much more damage than good, removing delicate information so unless you really know what you are doing, best to leave retouching to professionals. Be aware that dark photos can usually be lightened fairly well, but photos that were taken too bright ("blown-out") are very difficult to salvage for there is nothing but white pixels and no underlying tones to be enhanced.

A couple more general helpful bits of photo savvy:

1) Printing – Though rare to need printed photos any more, here are some tips. The same file could look drastically different printed from different printers depending on the printer profiles and option settings. Also, some brands of paper, like Costco's Kirkland brand, perform better if you leave them out to dry for a while instead of stacking them right away.
2) Scanning – If you have a hardcopy photo always scan it in at 300dpi. If it's a small photo, you may want to change the resulting size (usually the option exists under advanced settings) to a bigger size or a percentage over 100% depending on how much bigger you need it. If you are scanning a catalogue or magazine, select the "descreen" option (again, usually under advanced settings) to remove some of the lines that typically appear.

Your printable resolution jpg files should be around 3-6MB. Web sized files could be well under 1MB.